

Message Text

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PAGE 01 KUALA 02172 150904Z

15

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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P R 150500Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3101

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY MANILA

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CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, MY

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION BERJAYA PARTY WINS SABAH STATE ASSEMBLY
ELECTIONS

REF: KUALA LUMPUR 1966 (DTG 050930Z APR 76)

1. STATE NEWS AGENCY REPORTS VICTORY FOR THE BERJAYA
PARTY IN THE SABAH STATE ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS WHICH ENDED YESTERDAY
(APRIL 14). TUN HAJI MOHAMED FUAD AND HIS COLLEAGUES SWEPT 27
OF 48 SEATS WITH ONE CONSTITUENCY STILL NOT ACCOUNTED FOR
(KUAMAT). THEY WILL FORM THE STATE GOVERNMENT AND HAVE THE
CONSTITUTIONAL PRIVILEGE OF APPOINTING AN ADDITIONAL SIX
ASSEMBLYMEN WHICH WILL GIVE THEM A 33 SEAT MAJORITY IN THE 54
SEAT ASSEMBLY (34 IF THEY WIN IN KUAMAT). FUAD HAS ANNOUNCED
THAT THE NEW STATE CABINET WILL BE SWORN IN TODAY (APRIL 15).

2. TUN MUSTAPHA'S DEFEATED SABAH ALLIANCE TOOK ONLY 20

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PAGE 02 KUALA 02172 150904Z

SEATS (21 IF THEY WIN IN KUAMAT) WHICH GIVES THEM A

BLOCKING THIRD ON CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES. HOWEVER, SOME DEFECTIONS TO BERJAYA ARE EXPECTED, THEREFORE THEIR STRENGTH COULD BE REDUCED BELOW THE NECESSARY 18 SEATS. PEKEMAS, BERSATU AND THE OTHER SMALLER PARTIES FAILED TO TAKE A SINGLE SEAT IN THE FIRST FREELY CONTESTED ELECTIONS SINCE 1967. IRONICALLY, UNLESS MASSIVE DEFECTIONS TAKE PLACE MUSTAPHA AND THE ALLIANCE WILL STILL CONTROL THE 16 MAN SABAH DELEGATION TO THE FEDERAL PARLIAMENT. OF THE TOP ALLIANCE CANDIDATES. DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER HERMAN LUPING WAS THE ONLY ONE TO LOSE HIS SEAT, ALTHOUGH THE OTHER DEPUTY CHIEF MINISTER, DZULKIFLI BIN DATUK HAJI ABDUL HAMID WON BY A RELATIVELY NARROW MAJORITY. OF THE 183,244 VOTES REPORTED AT THIS TIME, 54 PERCENT WENT TO BERJAYA, 43 PERCENT TO THE SABAH ALLIANCE AND 2 PERCENT TO OTHER PARTIES AND INDEPENDENTS.

3. COMMENT. DESPITE THE PREDICTIONS OF THE PUNDITS. INCLUDING THOSE IN THIS EMBASSY, TUN MUSTAPHA'S OVERWHELMING CONTROL OF THE STATE APPARATUS, HIS MONOPOLY OF SABAH AIR HELICOPTERS AND PLANES, AND THE VASTLY GREATER SUMS OF MONEY HE WAS ABLE TO POUR INTO THE CAMPAIGN APPARENTLY COULD NOT OVERCOME THE STRONG REVULSION OF A MAJORITY OF SABAHANS (PRINCIPALLY KADAZANS AND CHINESE) TO HIS CORRUPTION, RACIAL CHAUVANISM AND DICTATORIAL RULE. BERJAYA'S VICTORY WOULD SEEM TO COMPLETE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S CAMPAIGN TO WEAKEN MUSTAPHA'S PERSONAL POLITICAL POWER, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING. HOWEVER, KUALA LUMPUR WOULD PROBABLY HAVE BEEN HAPPIER IF THE SABAH ALLIANCE HAD WON BUT BERJAYA HAD TAKEN A STRONG MINORITY POSITION. (WHICH IS WHAT PEOPLE CLOSE TO THE PRIME MINISTER HAD PREDICTED). BERJAYA'S LEADERSHIP IS BASED ON CHRISTIAN KADAZANS AND SO CALLED SINO-KADAZENS (WHO ARE BUMIPUTRAS UNDER THE STATE CONSTITUTION) AS WELL AS ETHNIC CHINESE (NON-BUMIPUTRAS). WHILE BERJAYA IS TECHNICALLY A BUMIPUTRA DOMINATED PARTY, IT MAY NOT SEEN AS SUCH BY THE UNITED MALAYS NATIONAL ORGANIZATION WHICH LINKS BUMIPUTRA STATUS WITH ISLAM. THUS THERE COULD BE RELUCTANCE WITHIN UMNO TO ACCEPT BERJAYA INTO THE NATIONAL FRONT. HOWEVER, A CAREFUL CHOICE WILL HAVE TO BE MADE BETWEEN THE SABAH ALLIANCE AS AN OPPOSITION PARY IN PARLIAMENT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 KUALA 02172 150904Z

OR THE STATE GOVERNMENT AS AN OPPOSITION PARTY, DEPENDING ON WHICH IS ADMITTED TO THE FRONT. SINCE FUAD LACKS THE INDEPENDENCE AND PLAIN OLD CONTRARINESS OF MUSTAPHA THE STATE GOVERNMENT SHOULD NOW LISTEN MORE CLOSELY TO KUALA LUMPUR THAN IT HAS IN THE PAST. ONE OF THE BONUSES FOR K.L. FROM THIS WILL PROBABLY BE AGREEMENT BY THE STATE GOVERNMENT TO FEDERALIZATION OF PETROLEUM DEVELOPMENT UNDER PETRONAS. (UNWILLINGNESS TO GIVE

UP CONTROL OVER OFFSHORE OIL WAS THE KEY ELEMENT IN
MUSTAPHA'S SPLIT WITH TUN RAZAK CIRCA 1974-75.)
UNDERHILL

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